

# North Fork Lewis River Watershed

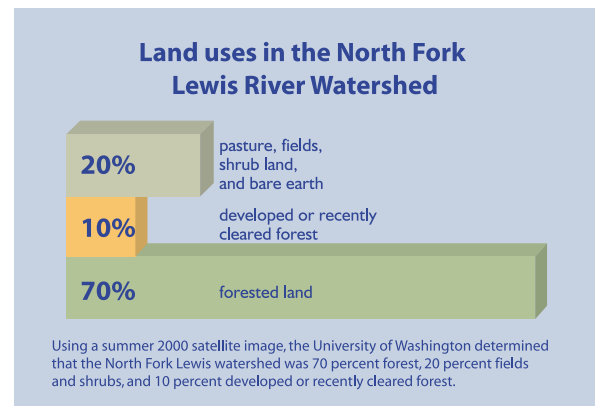
## Description of the watershed

The North Fork Lewis River flows almost 90 miles west from its headwaters on Mount Adams to its confluence with the Columbia River near Woodland. Its 847-square-mile watershed is in parts of Skamania, Cowlitz, and Clark counties. The relatively small part of the watershed in Clark County extends west from forested lands east of Amboy to rural areas of Cedar Creek and hills east of the City of Woodland. Outside of Clark County, the watershed is almost entirely forestland.

The nature of the watershed changed immensely with the construction of three hydroelectric dams between the 1920s and 1950s. This created three reservoirs, but construction of the Ariel Dam blocked salmon migration. Only the streams below Ariel Dam and its reservoir, Lake Merwin, are accessible to salmon. Of these, only Cedar Creek is of significant size. Bull trout and Dolly Varden inhabit the reservoirs and some streams above the dams.

Cedar Creek is the only major North Fork Lewis River tributary to originate in Clark County and has important salmon habitat. Above Lake Merwin, Siouxon Creek and Canyon Creek are the only other major tributaries of the North Fork that are partially within Clark County.

The North Fork Lewis River and its reservoir lakes are important local and regional resources for boating, fishing, and swimming. In Clark County, there are several publicly-owned river access points, including Eagle Island, Haapa Boat Launch, Camp Ground, and Siouxon Park.



## How healthy are the North Fork Lewis River watershed streams?

Observed stream health in the watershed is generally good to excellent. There are fewer stream health problems in the North Fork Lewis River watershed than in other more populated areas of the county. Water temperatures in lower Cedar Creek are at times too warm for salmon and other aquatic life.

Although water quality information for the streams in the Clark County portion of the North Fork Lewis River watershed is limited, some data is available for the main stem of the North Fork Lewis River, Horseshoe Lake in Woodland, and Cedar Creek. Altogether, data is available for approximately 17 percent of the watershed in Clark County. Two sites in Cedar Creek watershed have a combination of water chemistry, stream insect, and harmful bacteria test results that indicate sound overall stream health. This data agrees with what would be expected by looking at a map of land uses.

The observed stream health ranges from excellent to fair. The North Fork Lewis River and Lake Merwin have an overall rating of excellent based on water

chemistry and harmful bacteria. Cedar Creek health appears to range from good in upper reaches above Amboy and in Chelatchie Creek, to fair in the lower reach near the Grist Mill. Rural residential development, some farming activities, forest clearing, and stock ponds affect Cedar Creek health. Horseshoe Lake in Woodland is rated as fair, but has relatively high amounts of nutrients causing excessive algae growth.

The following bar charts show the overall health ratings for the watershed.

